

THE VALLEY OF LILIES

she came back to her senses, she felt the pain in her body and perceived that she had been thus wounded.¹

But all these things Catherine bore with her usual unalterable patience and humility. They did it all with holy intention and for the good of her soul, she said, and she ever prayed for her assailants as for kind and beloved benefactors. No complaint ever crossed her lips, even when a friar robbed her of the money she had for the poor. " On her tongue and in her heart she had nought save Jesus ; along the streets she walked with Jesus ; her eyes gazed fixedly upon Jesus, nor did they ever open through curiosity to behold other objects, unless they were such that could guide her to Jesus; wherefore she was often seen rapt in ecstasy, and lifted up in wondrous abstraction and excess of mind." Later, when she was told that men called her a hypocrite and deceiver, she answered: " They speak sooth, for, if the world knew me, it would stone me. I am the greatest of all sinners ; and what remains but that you all pray for me, that God may illumine me, and bring me to humility and patience and to do penance for my sins ? Would that I could embrace and kiss the feet of those who know me so well! " ²

Hardest of all was it to bear when they deprived her of the Blessed Sacrament. Whenever she could, she communicated every day; not only was this the centre of her whole inner life, but her very bodily existence seemed to depend upon it. So great was her inflamed desire of being united to her celestial Bridegroom in this way, that it was physical, no less than mental agony, to be thus deprived of His embraces. "I am a miserable wretch," we find her writing to one of her friars, "for my sins are so manifold that, since you went away, I have never been worthy to receive the most sweet and venerable Sacrament. I tell you this in order that you may help me to weep, and pray that I may be aided, so that I may receive the fullness of grace. Pardon my ignorance, father, and remember me at your most holy Mass, and I will

¹ *Legenda*, III. vi. 12, 13 (§§ 406,407) ; *Contestatio Fr. Simonis de Cortona* (Casanatenae MS.), pp. 514, 515.

² Tantucci, p. 38 ; *Contestatio Fr. Barontti*, MS.
«'/. , pp. 509, 510,